

VA's Veteran Small Business Verification Requirements
Veterans Small Business Verification Act
Public Law 11-275

Frequently Asked Questions

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I. Why is this happening?

Question: I got an email from the VA about veteran small business; what is this?

Answer: A law was passed to better protect Veteran-owned small businesses such as yours by strengthening the standards for verification. The email was followed by a letter in the mail via UPS. Both say basically the same thing - we just wanted to make sure you got the information on the changes happening to the Veteran's First Contracting Program and the Vendor Information Pages (VIP) database.

You should check your mail for a letter from VA providing more details. You will have to send in some documentation - it is all spelled out in the letter.

Once you have read through the letter, if you still have questions, call us.

And if you haven't received the letter, please call our help desk at 202-618-3765 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Eastern time, or send an email message to [**vacoexam@va.gov**](mailto:vacoexam@va.gov).

Question: I just read the letter in the mail from VA; what is happening?

Answer: The Veterans Small Business Verification Act passed in October 2010 created a new law regarding verification requirements to participate in the Veteran's First Contracting Program. The law is designed to protect Veteran-owned businesses and their owners by strengthening the verification procedures.

This letter provides information on the changes and gives you instructions on how to take necessary actions if you want to continue your eligibility for VA veteran small business set-aside awards.

VA is authorized by law to set-aside contracts specifically for veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses, but only if those businesses have received verified status from the Secretary.

Question: What was the purpose of the letter sent to Veteran-owned small businesses on December 10, 2010?

Answer: VA sent these notices as required by law. The Veterans Small Business Verification Act, part of Public Law 111-275, directed VA to notify all businesses in the Vendor Information Pages (VIP) database that are not currently verified by VA of the need to submit either further documentation or an application package for verification within 90 days of receiving the notification. By completing the legal requirement, VA will have a solid database of verified service-disabled and other Veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs and VOSBs).

Question: Why was this legislation passed?

Answer: The Verification Act was a result of increasing scrutiny of the SDVOSB/VOSB set-aside program and to protect the Veterans who qualify for the program. In general, as dollars flowing to a program increase, so does the need for effective oversight. The Government Accountability Office's (GAO) October 2009 report on the potential for fraud in the government-wide SDVOSB Program would seem to have been a driver behind this legislation, although GAO's report included a mix of findings related to both VA and non-VA contracting actions.

II. What does it mean for me?

Question: What is to be gained from the new verification process?

Answer: This new verification effort seeks to ensure the credibility of the VA's Veterans First Contracting Program as a benefit directed to the Veterans who have truly earned it. By law, VA can award an SDVOSB or VOSB set-aside contract only to firms that have been verified as eligible. Firms already registered in the database but not currently verified must submit their materials within 90 days after the VA notice, or their entry will be removed from public view in the database. Firms registering after October 13, 2010 (the date of enactment of P.L. 111-275) will not be publicly viewable in the database until the company has been verified. These two important steps will result in a VIP database that consists solely of firms VA has pre-screened as eligible for the Veterans First Contracting Program benefits.

Question: How many notifications were sent, and to whom?

Answer: VA sent out 13,834 notifications to businesses that are not currently verified or whose verification will expire within the 90 day period.

Question: Why did VA spend so much money sending the notices out by UPS?

Answer: The law states that VOSBs have 90 days from receipt of the notification from VA to submit the required documentation; otherwise, VA is required to remove the business from public view on the database. Therefore, VA needed a mechanism to track delivery date and found UPS was the best source for reliably documenting that date.

Since any business that does not comply is deleted from the database, this was done to ensure that no businesses are deleted without having first received the notification from VA.

Question: Why didn't VA verify VOSB status in the past?

Answer: When the VIP database was created in 2004, Veterans had to answer five "gateway" qualifications to attest to their status as a Veteran or service-disabled Veteran. The 5 criteria are:

1. **Veteran:** A person who served on active duty with the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines or Coast Guard, for any length of time and at any place and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Reservists or members of the National Guard called to Federal active duty or disabled from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty or while in training status also qualify as a Veteran.

2. **Veteran-owned Business:** Not less than 51% of the firm is owned by one or more Veterans, or in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51% of the stock is owned by one or more Veterans; and the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more Veterans.

3. **Service-Disabled Veteran:** A Veteran who possesses a disability rating letter issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs, establishing a service-connected rating between 0% and 100% or a disability determination from the Department of Defense.

4. **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business:** Not less than 51% of the firm is owned by one or more service-disabled Veterans, or in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51% of the stock is owned by one or more service-disabled Veterans; and the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more service-disabled Veterans--or in the case of a Veteran with a permanent and severe disability, a spouse or permanent caregiver of such Veteran.

5. Small Business Concern: The firm must be small within the standards issued by the Small Business Administration for its industry code. [A link is provided that takes the Veteran to the SBA size standards publication.]

Historically, small businesses have been able to self-represent their status in federal acquisitions. P.L. 109-461 (December 2006) established VA's Veterans Small Business Verification Program and created the requirement that VA examine all self-proclaimed Veteran-owned small businesses for ownership and control. The Verification Act now requires VOSBs to submit supporting documentation before a verification decision can be made. In order to protect Veterans, VA supports the legal requirement that sole source and set-aside contracts meant for Veterans and service-disabled Veterans go only to firms legitimately owned and controlled by Veterans or service-disabled Veterans.

Question: Will there be a formal process for notifying a VOSB/SDVOSB once it is "Verified"?

Answer: A formal letter is dispatched to the company once a decision is made. Additionally, the VetBiz.gov Vendor Information Pages database is modified to add the approved VOSB Verification Program logo to the company's profile.

Question: I am verified, why did I receive this letter? *I can see my company listed in VIP!*

Answer: Did you receive a verification letter from the VA? If not, although you have previously *registered* your business on the VIP database, you were self-representing your status as a veteran-owned and controlled small business. However, the Congress has changed the law requiring the VA to verify your status. In addition to checking your veteran and service disabled status, the VA must request all relevant business documents to determine that it is owned and controlled by a Veteran or Veterans.

This is similar to what you do in CCR (the Central Contractor Registry).

The law requires that the documents be submitted to VA within 90 days of your receipt of this letter; otherwise, VA will be required to remove your business from the database.

Question: What do I need to do?

Answer: If you would like to take part in the Veteran's First Contracting Program, and be eligible for VA Veteran small business set-aside contract awards, you will have to send in a" documents requested in the letter. This will allow VA to properly examine your business status under the new procedures set by the new law.

Question: What documents do I need to submit?

Answer: Please pull up the documents we sent you or [click here](#) to view the required document matrix.

Question: From the documents that I submit, how does CVE determine my Veteran and/or service-disabled status?

Answer: By submitting your VA Form 0877, you authorize CVE to access your VA records. All Veteran owners and eligible surviving spouses must supply either their Social Security number or VA file number. CVE staff with security clearances then access the BIRLS database to determine the eligibility of the applicant. The Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) is a VA Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) database containing records of all beneficiaries, including Veterans whose survivors applied for death benefits.

Question: I don't have those (or all those) documents. What do I do?

Answer: If you cannot provide any of documents requested because your company is recently created, or your company does not maintain them, or if the request for documents do not apply to your company, just put that in writing in a cover letter when you send everything else in on a CD.

Question: What database(s) will document final Verification?

Answer: The VetBiz.gov Vendor Information Pages database, maintained by the Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE) is VA's official database of verified businesses.

Question: Who among government agencies will have access and be able to use the VOSB/SDVOSB data?

Answer: Access to the VIP database will not change. It is a public source. All VA Contracting Officers must use it. Contracting Officers from other agencies may use it, although they are not required to do so and they also cannot require that a firm be verified before awarding a non-VA contract.

Question: What will stop marketers from using VOSB/SDVOSB data to capture them for their purpose?

Answer: Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is closely guarded at VA. Except for the VA Form 0877 application for verification, all Veterans are required to redact, or black out, any PII from all documents submitted to CVE for the Verification program. This includes removing all Social Security numbers and home address (unless it is also the business address) from all documents. It also includes blacking out the bank

routing number and business' checking account number from the cancelled checks requested.

Marketers will not see anything that they cannot see currently, and may continue to use the database as they have in the past, the same as any other member of the public.

Question: If a VOSB/SDVOSB was verified more than six months before the VA letter of December 10, 2010 was received, do they have to request renewal within the 90 day timeframe outlined in the 10 December letter? If so, will the firm remain in the VIP database and be available to anyone to know that the firm is verified?

Answer: Yes. A renewal application is required. A VOSB/SDVOSB must submit a renewal application annually. If a business received a letter requesting the documentation, it is because the verification will expire in less than six months. A renewal application package including all the required documentation is necessary. A currently verified firm will remain visible in the VIP database as long as a renewal package is received within the 90 day time frame.

Question: If a VOSB/SDVOSB was verified less than six months before the December 10 VA letter do they have to request renewal within 90 days of that letter? If so, will the firm remain in the VIP database and be available to anyone to know that the firm is verified?

Answer: No. The verified firm will remain in the VIP database throughout its verification period. At the end of the one year verification period, the firm must submit a complete renewal package that will include all the required documents as specified in the December 10 notification. It is imperative that the VOSB/SDVOSB submit its renewal package at least 90 days prior to its verification expiration in order to remain in the database.

Question: If a VOSB/SDVOSB was registered but did not request verification before the December 10 VA letter, do they have to request verification within 90 days of that letter?

Answer: Yes. If they do not submit their complete verification package within 90 days of the receipt of the letter, they will be removed from the VIP database.

Question: If a VOSB/SDVOSB is not previously verified, is VIP registered, and has turned in the request for verification within the required 90-day period, will the firm remain in the database and be available to anyone to know that the firm is self-certified but not yet verified?

Answer: As long as a firm that is currently in the VIP database submits the entire application package within the 90 day time frame, the firm will remain visible in VIP.

Question: How long will the verification process take after all the required documents are submitted?

Answer: VA is currently working hard to verify the entire VIP database by the end of summer 2011.

Question: Will a previously verified VOSB/SDVOSB be removed from public view in the database while the business is pending the annual renewal process?

Answer: CVE's current policy allows a firm to remain visible in the VIP database while awaiting the completion of the renewal examination. Once the application inventory is cleared, it is imperative for a firm to submit its renewal package at least 90 days prior to expiration in order to remain in the database.

Question: What is required for renewal and how long does that process take?

Answer: At this time, all renewal applications require all of the business documents as outlined in the chart that was attached to the December 10 letter. Because of the new requirement for documentation, these renewals will be processed in the same queue as new verifications.

Question: How do I send VA the documents?

Answer: Use the chart to locate and select your type of business listed on the top of the column of the chart (please choose just one). Selections include:

Business Type	Definition
Sol Prop	Sole Proprietor
Part	Partnership
LLC/LLP	Limited liability company/limited liability partnership
Corp S or C	Corporation (subchapter S or subchapter C)*

* An S corporation is a corporation that, for Federal income tax purposes, makes a valid election to be taxed under Subchapter S of Chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code.

* A C corporation is a corporation that, for Federal income tax purposes, is taxed under 26 U.S.C. § 11 and Subchapter C (26 U.S.C. § 301 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code.

1. Next, read down the appropriate column for an "X" in the box to identify the documents required for your business type. Make a photocopy of these documents.

2. For your protection, use a marker to "black-out" any personal information on your copied documents, like a Social Security number, home address or home phone number.

3. Review your copied documents to ensure your business name and address are easy to read. It is OK to hand-write the company name and your 9-digit Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number at the top of the form.
4. After checking for completeness, scan each document electronically in .pdf file format.
5. Create a CD with all your documents on it and label it with your company's DUNS number, followed by your company name (example: 123 456 789 Jones, LLC).
6. In a cover letter, be sure to inform us that you have removed all sensitive information from your documents and, if you are not sending one or more of the required documents, please include a note of explanation in that cover letter.
7. Using a commercial courier service (such as UPS, FedEx, or similar service), send the CD to the address below. Important! Do not send by the US Postal Service! This is due to mail security arrangements at federal buildings that may damage or destroy the CD.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Center for Veterans Enterprise (00VE-275)
Attn: Verification
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

8. For those who would prefer to upload submissions electronically, VA will post detailed instructions on www.VetBiz.gov on or about February 1, 2011.

Question: Can I just mail paper copies?

Answer: VA strongly urges you to submit your documents on a CD to aid VA in processing the large number of anticipated applicants. If you don't have the capability at home, you could take your documents to a printing/copying/shipping service (e.g. Kinkos, Office Max, Staples, and others) If this doesn't work for you, you can submit paper copies.

Question: Who will see this documentation? Will it be secure?

Answer: Your application VA Form 0877 that is already in our files required your social security number and is held in VA's secure system. We are now asking you to 'black out' any sensitive information, like your SSN, from any documents that will be submitted.

All those who will receive your information will have an appropriate security clearance and understand the requirement to keep all documents confidential and secure.

Question: I'm already verified but I heard about the changes, do I need to take action?

Answer: If you are already verified then you do not need to take any action now but please remember that you are required to update your profile annually.

Double-check the VIP database to see if you have a "verified" designation.

Question: Will there be a formal process for a VOSB/SDVOSB in letting Contracting Officers know they are "Verified"?

Answer: All VA Contracting Officers are required to check the VIP database before awarding a VOSB/SDVOSB sole source or set-aside contract under the provisions of P.L. 109-461. This is the only place for positive identification of a Verified business. If an apparently successful offeror on a VA VOSB/SDVOSB sole source or set-aside contract is not showing a current verification in VIP, the company will be processed through our FastTrack 21 program that prioritizes these businesses for verification with 21 business days.

Question: What does the "order of priority" mean and how does it affect me?

Answer: In order to expedite this new verification process and allow VA to provide Veteran's with services they need, Verification examinations are processed in the following manner.

1. If your company is currently self-certified and you received an award you will be verified within 21 days.
2. If your company has had business with VA in the past you will receive the next priority.
3. If you have already submitted your application, you will be verified in the order we receive your documents.
4. If you do not fit these categories, then your information will be verified in the order the application and/or documents are submitted.

That means as soon as you provide all of your completed documents you will secure your place in line. But if you do not complete your application or explain why the documents were not relevant your application will be denied and you will not be eligible to participate in the Veteran First Contracting Program.

Question: How long will it take to get my verified status?

Answer: VA anticipates it will take 90 days upon receipt of your documents to provide a decision on your company. Remember, the sooner we receive your complete documentation, the sooner your company can be examined.

III. Where do I go for more information?

Question: Where can I find more official information?

Answer: The VA will be adding more detailed information to its www.VetBiz.gov Web page as well as the OSDDBU Web page at www.va.gov/OSDBU. VA will be verifying almost 15-thousand businesses so we ask for your patience as we carefully complete this important process.

Question: Where can I find this new statute (law)?

Answer: The full title is Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, Public Law (P.L.) 111-275, Section 104. You can find it online in numerous places including:

On line at the Library of Congress Thomas:
<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.3219>

GovTrack

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-3219>

IV. Miscellaneous?

Question: Who are you? Are you part of the VA?

Answer: We are a contractor providing help desk support for the Veterans small business verification program. All our employees have an appropriate security clearance from VA

Question: General complaints/questions about VA?

Answer: While your question/concern is important to us, I am only knowledgeable regarding the Veterans First Contracting Program. You may contact [See Attached List] with your complaint or question.

Toll Free Numbers for Contacting VA

Department Name(s)	Toll Free Number(s)
VA Benefits: Burial	1-800-827 -1000
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death Pension• Dependency Indemnity Compensation• Direct Deposit• Directions to VA Benefits Regional Offices• Disability Compensation• Disability Pension• Education• Home Loan Guaranty• Medical Care• Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment	
Beneficiaries in receipt of Pension Benefits	1-877-294-6380
Children of Women Vietnam Veterans (CWVV) Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Spina Bifida Health Care Program	1-877-345-8179 1-888-820-1756
	(or)
Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) CHAMPVA In-House Treatment Initiative (CITI)	1-800-733-8387
Education (GI Bill)	1-888-442-4551
Health Care Benefits	1-877-222-8387
Income Verification and Means Testing	1-800-929-8387

Life Insurance:

Service members and/or Veterans Group Life Insurance Program	1-800-419-1473
All other VA Life Insurance Programs	1-800-669-8477

Mammography Helpline	1-888-492-7844
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Meds by Mail	1-888-385-0235 (or) 1-866-229-7389
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Special Issues -Gulf War/Agent Orange/Project ShadlMustard Agents and Lewisite/Ionizing Radiation	1-800-749-8387
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Status of Headstones and Markers	1-800-697-6947
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Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)	1-800-829-4833
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For health care services, contact your nearest VA medical facility. To locate all VA facilities, click on Find a VA Facility.